



# Newsletter

*"Service of and witness to the faith are necessary for salvation"*

-CCC § 1816

**Vol. 2, Issue 2, © February 2007**

## The History of Valentine's Day

How in the world, you may wonder, did the name of such a pious Christian and Catholic martyr as St. Valentine ever become associated with the lover's letters known as Valentines? Why is it that on St. Valentine's Day lovers send messages all done up in fancy cards? What connection do these greetings have with the great St. Valentine, priest and martyr?

Some say there is no connection, except the fact that this man of God who lived in the third century just happened to be martyred on February 14. However, there seems to be more to it than that. We might suggest that love is very much like martyrdom; in love man gives his all, just as in martyrdom, he gives his all. Further, love has its pains, which are not unlike those of martyrdom. Seriously, there is a connection.

On February 14 in ancient Rome it was the custom of boys to draw lots from a huge container the names of girls with whom they were to be partners in the various forms of celebration. Should John draw the name of Mary, then John and Mary were partners in all the festivities in honor of the goddess of that day. This was a haphazard, hit and miss method of finding a companion. It was blind dating on a huge scale. It wasn't very satisfactory to the boys and girls; it was too often an additional occasion for ugly immorality in already deeply immoral Rome.

The Catholic priests of the time condemned the custom as too promiscuous, too likely to lead to sin. They tried to Christianize the custom. They tried to give the boys and girls a clean, healthy, Christian view of dating and marriage. Foremost in this effort was St. Valentine.

At that time also, Rome was embroiled in many wars, which dragged out so long that many Roman citizens were unwilling to go into battle. The married men did not want to leave their families; the engaged openly rebelled against leaving their sweethearts. It was growing more difficult to recruit an army.

Hearing this, the emperor, Claudius the Cruel, decreed that for some time there should be no more marriage ceremonies. Not only no more weddings, but those engaged must break off their engagements.

Father Valentine felt sorry for the young people. He was particularly sad at the thought of the complete moral collapse this would bring about among the young. If they could not be married, they would live as married people without the wedding, without the solemn pledge that they would be true to each other. One day, Father Valentine secretly united in holy matrimony a couple who came to him for that purpose.

Others heard, came, and were married. These young people wanted to do the right thing; they wanted to have the blessing of Almighty God on their union: they wanted to enter the solemn contract that is the wedding ceremony. Soon there were as many

weddings in Rome as if there had never been the senseless decree against them.

When these things came to light, Father Valentine was seized by the Roman authorities, was sentenced to be beaten with clubs, then to be stoned, and finally to be beheaded outside the Flaminian Gate, which for a time was called the Gate of Valentine. He was martyred on February 14, in the year 270, eighteen hundred and thirty-two years ago. His day of death does have some connection, for the reason just mentioned, with the modern celebration of St. Valentine's Day.

While it is not harmful for us to observe the day with non-religious gestures, it is important that we do not lose sight of the fact that Valentine's Day is a religious festival.

The heart is a favorite emblem of the Catholic Church. It is traditionally believed to be the center of all emotions and feelings. At least it registers those feelings. We Catholics have a special devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, the heart that throbbed with love for every one of us, the heart that burst with love of us.

May I suggest that we make all our human love harmonize with that Divine Love? May I urge that we put our hearts in tune with the Divine Heart? May I recommend that on St. Valentine's Day we put the Heart of Jesus Christ, that is the love of Jesus Christ, in the center of all our earthly loves?

Jesus died out of love for St. Valentine, just as Jesus died for every one of us. St. Valentine in turn died for the love of Jesus Christ.

Yes, send Valentines on St. Valentine's Day, but don't forget that there is a Divine Heart that would like to be your Valentine. To that Divine Heart we can say with all reverence: "Jesus, be my Valentine."

## *Society News*

On January 2, 2007, Society President, Victor R. Claveau, MJ, appeared on an Ave Maria Radio program, hosted by Teresa Tameo. While the program segment lasted only 20 minutes, it resulted in 130 people accessing our website, during the next 24 hours. Many people signed up to be Society members and still others asked to be placed on the Society's mailing list. A hearty welcome goes out to the many new Society members.

As news of the Society spreads, we hear that our materials are being used in a number of countries, including, Australia, Canada, England and the Caribbean.

Another hearty welcome goes out to [Thomas Bell, of the United States Army](#), who has agreed to be the Society's military liaison. Tom will focus his efforts on spreading the word about the society to the Army community, both in the US and overseas. Please pray for the success of his efforts.

Our first national advertisement about the Society will appear in the March publication of *Lay Witness* magazine. *Lay Witness* is an award winning bimonthly magazine that provides solid nourishment in keeping with the Catholic Church's teachings. To receive a **FREE COPY** of *Lay Witness* call: 1-800-MY-FAITH (1-800-693-2484) (Ask for the March issue)

Or write: Catholics United for the Faith  
International Headquarters  
827 North Fourth Street  
Steubenville, OH 43952

Your **tax-deductible** annual contribution of \$40.00 or more provides you with many member benefits, including:

- One full year of CUF's award-winning *Lay Witness* magazine
- Access to CUF's Catholic hotline and Catholic Responses department.

Call the toll-free hotline or send an email with your questions on the faith. CUF will provide detailed, thorough answer that genuinely reflects the Church's true teachings.

- Up to 25% off all Emmaus Road Publishing books, tapes and other products.
- CUF's beautiful annual calendar.

**Leon Suprenant**, *President, Catholics United for the Faith*, is an Associate Member of the Pope John Paul II Society.

## *You should know about...*

### *Approaching 200th Anniversary:*

**Fathers of Mercy Still Going Strong  
Preaching Parish Missions, Retreats, Devotions**

**By Fr. Wade L. J. Menezes, CPM  
Vocation Director/Student Master**

**A**fter nearly 200 years of preaching parish missions, retreats and devotions, the Fathers of Mercy are still going strong – remaining faithful to their charism of mercy and to their apostolates of itinerant missionary preaching and the staffing of rural parishes.

Founded in 1808 in Lyon, France, the Congregation was formed to help bring lay faithful back to the practice of their Catholic Faith following the havoc and destruction that the French Revolution caused to the Catholic Church there. It may be said that the Community's holy founder, Fr. Jean Baptiste Rauzan (1757-1847), had one simple goal: to form a small band of itinerant missionary preachers to bring fallen away Catholics back to their Faith of baptism and to ignite further the Faith of those who never lost it.

A religious clerical Congregation of Pontifical Right, the Fathers of Mercy are recognized for their loyalty to the Magisterium and strong support of Church teachings. After nearly 200 years, both the tradition and charism continues. The Fathers of Mercy preach parish missions, retreats and devotions throughout the United States and Canada and assist bishops with the staffing of rural parishes. Recently, too, the Community has been invited to preach missions and retreats in Australia, England and India. Pastors interested in having a mission, retreat or particular devotion (e.g., Forty Hours, Saint Novena, etc.) conducted at their parish may telephone the Fathers of Mercy Mission Office at (270) 542-4146, Ext. 302.

The Church's plight is really no different today than when Fr. Rauzan first gathered a group of zealous priests to re-evangelize a spiritually devastated post-Revolutionary France. During this time of social and political unrest, vast numbers of individuals fell away from the practice of their Catholic Faith, thus resulting in a general moral decline. A similar situation exists even today: a materialist and pleasure-centered *culture of death* has so blinded humanity that not only have people lost sight of The Way, but many are unaware that they are even lost. Good and dedicated men, therefore, are needed

now more than ever to proclaim Christ's message of Truth and to call souls back to God so that they may have a share in Eternal Life.

Pope John Paul II once stated, "...the traditional parish mission, apparently abandoned too readily, is without substitute for the periodic and vigorous renewal of the Christian life and must be restored and innovated" (*Catechesi Tradendae*, 47). During a parish mission, the people of the parish gather each evening in their church for a series of conferences on the fundamental truths of the Catholic Faith, including the Ten Commandments, the Real Presence of our Lord in the Most Holy Eucharist, devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary and the forgiveness of sins in the Sacrament of Penance. The Community's work of re-evangelization also extends to serving the People of God as parish priests. The Fathers of Mercy especially staff those parishes that are located in rural and neglected areas.

To ensure the carrying-on of their apostolates even today, the Fathers of Mercy are always looking for good, faithful and dedicated men to spread the Mercy of God to all as the Congregation continues its 200-year-old mission of leading back home the prodigal children of our own times.

Men between the ages of 18 and 40 who believe that God may be calling them to pursue a priestly vocation that is part of a dynamic missionary preaching apostolate may contact the Fathers of Mercy by writing, telephoning, or e-mailing the Congregation at: The Fathers of Mercy, Attn: Vocation Office, 806 Shaker Museum Road, Auburn, KY 42206

(270) 542-4146, Ext. 2 – Website: [www.fathersofmercy.com](http://www.fathersofmercy.com) – E-Mail: [vocations@fathersofmercy.com](mailto:vocations@fathersofmercy.com)

Father Manezes is a Clergy Associate of the Pope John Paul II Society.

## *Bearing Witness to Christ*

**S**t. James the Greater, one of the apostles, was called greater to distinguish him from the other apostle of the same name who was called Less, perhaps because he was smaller in size or younger in age. St. James the Greater stands out because he was the first apostle to suffer martyrdom. Eleven years after Jesus spoke the words of our text, "You also will bear witness," St. James did bear witness by giving his life.

An acquaintance went out of his way to accuse our saint of being a Christian. At the trial his courage, fearlessness, and constancy impressed his accuser so deeply that the latter repented. Publicly he too declared himself a Christian and was condemned to death together with the apostle.

As St. James and his repentant accuser were led forth to execution, the latter begged pardon of St. James, who turned to him, embraced him and exclaimed:

"Peace be with you."

He then kissed him, and both were beheaded. The Bible describes this death very briefly:

"Agrippa killed James, the brother of John, with the sword." (Acts 12: 2).

By his death St. James bore glorious witness to Christ. He not only gave part of his life; he gave all his life.

What do we mean by bearing witness? A witness is one who testifies in a court or at a trial. He proves, or attempts to prove, certain facts, statements, or circumstances. To bear witness or testimony means to make a solemn statement or an affirmation that some thing took place or some word actually was spoken. Bearing witness means to offer evidence, valid, worthy evidence.

In the case of the followers of Christ, from the apostles on down, bearing witness means that by our words and by our actions-

- We prove and testify that what Christ claims to be, He really is.
- We prove that the Gospel is His word.

- We prove that the Church and the sacraments are the work of Christ.

The apostles gave glorious testimony to Christ:

1. By their preaching. On the first Pentecost we see St. Peter fearlessly preaching the faith. All the other apostles in different lands gave of their energies and talents to spread the word of God.

2. By their miracles. In those early days miracles were necessary to establish the infant Church. God gave His messengers the gift of tongues. God gave them the power of healing sickness and disease.

3. By dying for Christ. With the single exception of St. John, who died a natural death, all the apostles bore witness to Christ by their blood. They suffered martyrdom for their Master. And martyr means literally a witness, one who by his death bears witness to the truth of what Christ said.

But those words of Jesus, "You also will bear witness," were spoken not only to the apostles, they were spoken to us. We also must bear witness to Christ in our own day and way. How do we back up Christ's life and teaching?

1. By our words. When we openly profess that we believe in Christ and His teachings, we are bearing witness.

2. When we praise the goodness and virtues of Christ, His miracles and wonderful works, we bear witness.

3. We also testify to Christ when we tell and teach others about Him and what He taught.

4. Almost every day someone asks you about a certain belief or practice of the Church Christ founded. Giving an understandable answer or explanation is to show Christ to them who know Him not.

5. We bear witness by following Christ's example, by practicing the virtues He recommended. For example, a few years ago a local Presbyterian minister went out of his way to praise in a sermon a certain Catholic woman who had been very friendly to a Presbyterian neighbor, an elderly lady, who appreciated the kindness so much she told her minister about it. He told his congregation. That Catholic woman was bearing witness to Christ, putting our Lord's words into practice.

6. True witnesses to Christ will make sacrifices for their faith. They will, for example, take time to attend special services and devotions, especially the Rosary.

Ordinarily God does not ask martyrdom of all of us, but He does ask some sacrifice. Let us suppose it is Friday and you are invited to a meal of meat. Tactfully, courteously, but firmly you tell your host that you don't eat meat on Friday, in order to share in the sufferings of our Savior. You are bearing witness.

Incidentally, those outside the Church respect you when you keep the rules and regulations. They despise you when you weakly violate them.

In particular Christ asks us to sacrifice our evil inclinations. He asks us to forget human respect and our own self-will. He asks us to sacrifice some of our means and our time. Every one of you can see that the chances for bearing witness to Christ are without number.

You and I represent the Church Christ founded. By our words, by our actions, by our explanations of our faith we tell the world:

"I represent the Catholic Church. I represent the teachings and life of Christ. I represent Christ Himself."

St. James the Greater, the other apostles, the martyrs, and the good people down the centuries have born witness to Christ. So must you and I. —Victor R. Claveau, MJ

## *Questions from our members*

**A friend of mine, who happens to be the father of a Catholic priest, is a member of a Masonic lodge. He claims that the prohibition against Catholics joining the Masonic order is no**

**longer in force and the Church now allows Catholics to be Masons. Is this so? -Anon.**

The Church, through its Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, has formally declared that Catholics who enroll in Masonic associations are in a state of grave sin and may not receive Holy Communion. This declaration (See below), which is the most recent teaching of the Church, has affirmed nearly 300 years of papal pronouncements against Freemasonry on the grounds that the teachings of the Lodge are contrary to Catholic faith and morals.

The Church's declaration on Freemasonry exposes Catholic Masons to a number of penalties under canon law. For example, a Catholic who is aware that the Church authoritatively judges membership in Freemasonry to be gravely sinful must not approach Holy Communion (c. 916). The Church imposes the duty upon all grave sinners not to make a sacrilegious communion. Such a Catholic Mason who is aware of the grave sin must receive absolution in a sacramental confession before being able to receive communion again, unless there is a grave reason and no opportunity to confess (c. 916). This confession, in order to be valid, also requires the Catholic Mason to renounce his Masonic membership.

Further, because membership in Freemasonry is an external or public condition, the Catholic Mason can be refused Holy Communion by the pastors of the Church for obstinately persevering in his Masonic membership (c. 915). Such a Catholic Mason would also be forbidden from receiving the Anointing of the Sick (c. 1007) as well as ecclesiastical funeral rites if public scandal were to result (c. 1184, §1, °3).

Canon 1364 also imposes an automatic excommunication upon apostates, heretics, or schismatics. This canon could also apply to Catholic Masons. If, for example, a Catholic Mason embraced the theological teachings of Freemasonry that the Church has condemned (indifferentism, syncretism), he would be in heresy by virtue of his belief in these teachings. Further, if a Catholic Mason knew the Church opposes membership in Freemasonry, and yet adamantly and persistently refused to submit to the pope's authority in precluding his membership in the Lodge, he may also find himself in schism. Catholic Masons could also be subject to canon 1374, which imposes an interdict or just penalty upon those who join associations that plot against the Church.

For the canonical penalties to apply, the Catholic Mason would have to act in a gravely imputable way (that is, the Catholic would have to be aware of the Church's teaching on Freemasonry and, after being warned about it, choose to disregard it). In my personal experience, a fair number of Catholic Masons do act in a gravely imputable way in regard to their Masonic membership. In these cases, the canonical penalties, including excommunication, apply. The Church's penalties are not meant to alienate the person on whom the penalty is levied. Instead, the penalties are meant to communicate to the person the gravity of his conduct, encourage his repentance and reconciliation with the Church, and bring him back into the one fold of Christ. After all, the mission of the Church is the salvation of souls.

## **DECLARATION ON MASONIC ASSOCIATIONS**

**Issued by the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith on November 26, 1983.**

It has been asked whether there has been any change in the Church's decision in regard to Masonic associations since the new Code of Canon Law does not mention them expressly, unlike the previous Code.

This Sacred Congregation is in a position to reply that this circumstance is due to an editorial criterion, which was followed also in the case of other associations likewise unmentioned inasmuch as they are contained in wider categories.

Therefore the Church's negative judgment in regard to Masonic associations remains unchanged since their principles have always been considered irreconcilable with the doctrine of the Church and therefore membership in them remains forbidden. The faithful who enroll in Masonic associations are in a state of grave sin and may not receive Holy Communion.

It is not within the competence of local ecclesiastical authorities to give a judgment on the nature of Masonic associations, which would imply a derogation from what has been decided above, and this in line with the Declaration of this Sacred Congregation issued on 17 February 1981 (cf. AAS 73 [1981] pp. 240-241).

In an audience granted to the undersigned Cardinal Prefect, the Supreme Pontiff John Paul II approved and ordered the publication of this Declaration, which had been decided in an ordinary meeting of this Sacred Congregation.

Rome, from the Office of the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, 26 November 1983.

JOSEPH Card. RATZINGER  
Prefect  
+ Fr. JEROME HAMER, O.P.  
Titular Archbishop of Lorium  
Secretary

## *Evangelization tip of the Month*

**S**t. Charles Borromeo once said to his priests, "Be sure you first preach by the way you live." St. Francis of Assisi once said to his brothers, "Preach always and sometimes use words."

Archbishop Charles J. Chaput, of Denver presented a marvelous speech to the Synod of Bishops for America, which took place in Rome. I would like to quote a few sentences from this lecture

"The nature of being a "good pastor" is what I want to focus on today. We preach best, and teach best, by our personal example. Anything which enables us to do that -- as bishops -- is good. Anything which prevents us from doing that, is not. Each one of us wants to minister to God's people more fruitfully in the new millennium. But I believe this requires us to change -- as individuals and as bishops.

We need, first of all, to become simple again. By that I mean, Gospel simple. Jesus loved simplicity because it allowed Him to immerse Himself in the essential things of His Father's business. I believe we are in danger of losing that Christ-like focus as bishops. Our hemisphere has become a culture of noise, confusion and complication. We are a distracted people, both North and South, and we are now also a distracted Church. We have plans and committees and projects and staffs. All these things are important in their proper place. But at the end of the day, are we apostles . . . or are we executives? And what do our people really need: managers . . . or pastors?

Today, throughout our hemisphere, many of our people have found consumer capitalism to be much more appealing than the Gospel. Capitalism is a machine that works. It gets results. This is important, because as our economies and cultures interlock, consumerism and the practical atheism it breeds are now common problems throughout our hemisphere.

Yet the hunger for God persists in every human heart, even when it's buried under consumer goods. And too often, we are not feeding that hunger as effectively as the fundamentalists and

other evangelical Christians. I understand the frustration of my Latin American brothers very well when they talk about the invasion of aggressive religious sects into their countries. I face many of the same pastoral problems in northern Colorado. Hundreds of my own people leave the Catholic faith every year to join these fundamentalist groups.

The Church throughout our hemisphere needs to recover her original spiritual fire, which these groups now so successfully copy. We need to lead people back to the fullness of Jesus Christ, which can only be found in sacramental community and especially in the Eucharist. But how can we accomplish that? If we really want conversion, community and solidarity for the Church, we need to seek those things first within and among ourselves as brothers.

Jesus Christ alone is the way to eternal life. Let us never be ashamed of His name, or apologize for the message we preach and teach, because it is true for all persons in all times. We should shout that out, not leave it to others in sects which are not blessed with the full truth we find in our Catholic faith.

Brothers, as bishops, our task is to share that gift with others, to preach the word, be urgent in season and out of season, convince, rebuke and exhort, be unfailing in patience and in teaching" (2 Tm, 4:2). As Paul told Timothy, we must "do the work of the evangelist." We are evangelizers first. That is our paramount purpose." End quote.

Bishop Chaput was addressing his brother bishops, but he could have been speaking to each of us.

In order to be evangelists for Christ we must first be disciples of Christ.

\* \* \*

"We must fear God through love, not love him through fear."

—St. Francis de Sales

\* \* \*

## *"Actions Speak Louder than Words"*

**S**t. Anthony of Padua, the thirteenth century doctor of the Church, stated that when it comes to teaching the Catholic faith, "Actions speak louder than words." And, St. Anthony was especially aware of the importance of the act of kneeling before the Blessed Sacrament when teaching the doctrine of the Real Presence because God endorsed this act of adoration by means of a miracle, which St. Anthony and others witnessed. Martin Herbert recalls this miracle in a special 1994 Eucharistic Adoration issue of the *Immaculata* published by the Franciscan Friars of Marytown in Kenosha Wisconsin. Martin Herbert tells the story as follows:

A certain heretic by the name of Bononillo was unmoved by the persuasive reasoning of the Saint (Anthony). He was as stubborn as the mule standing beside him in denying the Real Presence.

Eyeing the mule, Anthony made an offer to Bononillo. He asked him whether he would give up his heresy if the mule were to bow down and adore its Creator present in the Blessed Sacrament. The heretic answered he would, provided he could lay down certain conditions: for two days the mule was not to be fed, and on the third day it was to be led into the public square. On one side of the square would be placed a tempting pile of fresh feed, on the opposite side Anthony could stand with what Bononillo contemptuously called the "body of Christ." Anthony agreed, but in all humility made one condition. If the animal did not kneel before the Blessed Sacrament, his sins alone were to be blamed.

The day arrived for this strange contest and the square was crowded with people. When the derisive Bononillo arrived with his half-starved mule, he was fully confident that his mule had sense and appetite enough to go after the feed. But he was wrong. Anthony had implored his Lord in the intervening two days for the soul of this heretic. God did not let his faithful servant down. When turned loose, the mule without the least hesitation advanced toward Anthony and knelt in an attitude of adoration before the Blessed Sacrament. With much emotion and contrition the heretic too fell on his knees and gave up his heresy.